

Giving Thanks for the Work of the Lord

The Epistle for the First Sunday in Advent is 1Thessalonians 3:9-13. Timothy had been sent a favorable report about his work at Thessalonica. Now Paul responds to Timothy's encouraging report. Paul, as he so often does, begins by giving thanks. He is expressing awe and gratitude to God after hearing about the faith of the Thessalonians. Words cannot express Paul's deep gratitude for the faith and love demonstrated by the Thessalonian Christians. Paul is grateful that they so well grasped the Gospel under Timothy's instruction, he gives thanks to God.

When he says: *we pray*, it means to beg, binding oneself, petitioning, beseeching or making a request. This is quantified both as to frequency (night and day) and quality (as earnestly as possible).

The phrase, *most earnestly*, translates a strong and unusual Greek compound word found in Ephesians 3:20: *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

In the midst of his own persecution, Paul managed to keep his focus on the one in charge, the Lord of the Church. The Lord is like the fixed point of reference that allows a spinning dancer or skater to maintain her axis and orientation. The Lord is like the lighthouse that immovably signals land and shelter no matter how great the storm.

The Lord, who has promised to be with us until the end of time, will keep us in His faith and kindle His love in our hearts so that we may love Him and one another.

Prayer: We praise You, O God, because the gates of hell cannot prevent the sown seed of Your Word from growing. Amen. (TLSB)